

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MUSCAT 00403 221113Z
ACTION SS-25

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R 221049Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4160
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AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 0403

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MU
SUBJECT: OMANI MILITARY REQUESTS

REF (A) STATE 044060, (B) STATE 069055 (NOTAL)

1. DURING MARCH 21 CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER ZAWAI,
MY FIRST MEETING WITH HIM AFTER HIS ALMOST CONTINUOUS
ABSENCE FROM OMAN SINCE JANUARY 25, I OUTLINED IN DETAIL USG
POSITION ON C-130 AIRCRAFT AS SPELLED OUT IN
REF A, LEAVING AIDE MEMOIRE. WHILE VERY ATTENTIVE
TO PRESENTATION, ZAWAWI HAD NO COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS
ABOUT IT NOR DID HE SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ANY RECENT DIS-
CUSSIONS WITH SAUDI GOVERNMENT OR LOCKHEED OFFICIALS
ON THE SUBJECT.

2. ZAWAWI DID ASK ABOUT OUR CONSIDERATION OF THE
SULTAN'S INTEREST IN BUYING HEAVY ARTILLERY (THE 175'S)
AND MORE TOW LAUNCHERS AND MISSILES. I SAID THAT PROS-
PECTS FOR OUR APPROVING EITHER OF THESE ARE VERY POOR
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INDEED, AND GAVE HIM BRIEF RATIONALE CONTAINED IN PARA
2 OF REF A. HE LOOKED A BIT DEJECTED AT THIS NEWS AND
QUIETLY WENT THROUGH THE FAMILIAR LINE ABOUT PDRY
BEING ABLE TO OUT-SHOOT OMANI ARTILLERY BY A GREAT DIS-
ANCE ALONG THE BORDER. OMAN, HE SAID, WANTED A WEAPON
WITH WHICH IT COULD DEFEND AGAINST SHELLING FROM THE
WEST IF IT OCCURRED, WITHOUT HAVING TO THROW ITS AIR

FORCE INTO SUCH A FRAY OVER PDRY TERRITORY TO TRY TO
SILENCE ANY SUCH BOMBARDMENT. HE ADDED THAT HE FOUND
IT HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY USG SALE TO OMAN OF A FEW
MORE TOWS WOULD IN ANY WAY JEOPARDIZE OUR REGIONAL ARMS
POLICY.

3. COMMENT. I WOULD HAVE PREDICTED A RATHER MORE VOLA-
TILE REACTION THAN THIS TO OUR TURNDOWN OF THESE OMANI
REQUESTS. PERHAPS IT WILL COME LATER AFTER ZAWAWI HAS
BEEN BACK LONG ENOUGH TO SETTLE DOWN AGIN INTO HIS RE-
SPONSIBILITIES, OR AFTER HE HAS RELAYED OUR RESPONSES
TO THE SULTAN. OR IT MAY BE THAT HM AND ZAWAWI SINCE
RAISING THESE MATTERS WITH ME IN EARLY JANUARY HAVE
SOUNDED OUT THEIR OWN MILITARY COMMAND ON THE MERITS
OF 175'S AND MORE TOWS, AND HAVE RUN INTO LUKEWARM REAC-
TIONS THAT HAVE MODERATED SULTAN'S INTEREST IN THIS
PARTICULAR MILITARY HARDWARE. FOR EMBASSY'S PART, WE WILL
LET THESE MATTERS LIE UNTIL OMANIS BRING THEM UP AGAIN.
WOLLE

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